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ABSTRACT

Improvements in teaching competencies, attitudes toward children, professional commitment, and philosophy of education of 31 vocational home economics teacher education students were measured through four self-evaluations during the last year in college and the first year of teaching. Comparison of mean scores was done by t-tests. Significant increases in teaching competencies were found both during the semester preceding student teaching and the student teaching block. Significant decreases in warmth of attitudes toward children (as measured by the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory) occurred while in college and again on the job. Professional commitment rose only while in college. No change ocurred in educational philosophy. (Author)

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LONGITUDINAL EVALUATION OF A HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

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The question of the kinds of knowledge which shall serve as basis in designing teacher education curricula raises debatable points of view, depending on whether one reasons from philosophical or emperical grounds. Both philosophical ideas regarding the nature of man and emperical judgments regarding results of learning experiments entered into the three studies which functioned as a basis for this research, namely the national study of Home Economics Education Objectives and Generalizations (Kreutz and Anthony, 1966), secondly, research at Ohio State regarding vocational Teacher Education Curricular Models (Ferguson, 1971), and the Oklahoma State University statement of Objectives for the Undergraduate Home Economics Education Program (mimeo.). These studies reflect the national points of view of two important groups of professional educators, namely home economics educators, and vocational educators, as well as that of the local department ultimately responsible for teaching the college courses. Each study supported the need for development of teacher education majors in these four areas: first, teaching competencies, second, supportive attitudes toward children, third, professional commitment and a fourth, pragmatic educational philosophy.

Since the age of systems analysis is upon us, longitudinal studies of this type are seldom found in literature (Cyphert, 1972). One notable exception exists in Home Economics Education, a cooperative venture by Chadderton, Coon, Ford, and Lehman (1960). Among the problems encountered in such research are keeping track of people as they move around the country over the extended period of time and the difficulty in attributing cause to events which are complicated by such a span of time and circumstances. Nevertheless, findings may help to pinpoint where changes in emphasis are needed in the professional curriculum.

Data Collection

Home economics education majors evaluated themselves on four instruments in order to provide evidence of self perceptions of growth. The sequence of self-evaluation by the two samples of students is shown in Table 1, one group studied by this researcher and the second by a graduate student in the department. The large drop in number of sample one subjects from September 1971 to February 1972 is due to the fact that many of the students who took the curriculum and methods course in the fall had not completed the necessary course work to enable them to go student teaching during the spring semester. Of the students who did complete the student teaching block of courses, (33 and 26), an amazingly large number (31 and 20) were located and completed the self-evaluation after being away from the college for one year in the case of sample one, and for one and one-half years in the case of sample two.

Refer to Table 1

Data were collected by using the following four attitude inventories. First, a Likert-type instrument consisting of 164 items developed by Cotrell (1971) at Ohio State was used to measure changes in these five areas of teaching competence: planning, execution, and evaluation of instruction, guidance, and professional role development. Second, the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory, a measure of permissive, warm, accepting, sympathetic, and supportive attitudes toward children, as described by Yee and Fruchter (1971), provided evidence of attitudes toward children. Third, a subset of 40 items from Laughlin's factor analysis (1965) of the Loftis Measure of Professional Commitment (1962) was used to indicate depth of commitment to education. Finally, the author had developed a brief, 11 item collection of philosophic points of view regarding education from Gander's work (1961). On the final completion of these instruments, the subjects also provided personal data, including reflections on courses taken in previous years.

Findings

The two samples of students were much alike in personal characteristics. All were Caucasians, from communities representative of the wide size variations existing in Oklahoma. Over two-thirds of the students had taken home economics in all four years of high school and usually had been FHA members at the same time, showing strong, continuous interest in the field. Seventeen, which is (55%) of sample one and 14 (70%) of sample two were employed in the profession of home economics immediately upon graduation from college.

When mean self-ratings of the two samples on the five competence categories of planning, execution, evaluation, guidance, and professional role development were examined, the means consistently increased throughout the time in college. However, once the subjects had been out of college and again rated themselves, their mean scores either remained essenially the same or had decreased. The tests of differences between successive means shown in Table 2 indicate that the increases in competence mean ratings which occured during the methods course in planning, execution, and evaluation ratings were significant. During the student teaching block there were significant increases for both samples of students in all five competence categories: planning, execution, evaluation, guidance and professional role development. For sample one, there also were significant decreases in self-ratings of planning and execution once the subjects were out of college.

Refer to Table 2

Comparison of mean scores for the 20 competence clusters resulted in the t-tests shown in Table 3, and further, more specific implications regarding the growth of students as they progressed through the professional curriculum. The students appeared to need much more help in the area of guidance such as obtaining background information on students, counseling students, involving resource

persons, and assisting students in planning post-graduate education and employment. They also appeared to not believe they had improved in contributing professional service or advancing their professional competence during either their years in college or their lives immediately following graduation.

Refer to Table 3

The researcher wondered whether these students who became employed following graduation had rated themselves differently in competence than those who did not gain employment. Therefore, t-tests of changes in self-ratings of those subgroups of 14 subjects were compared. There were a total of 18 significant changes in self-ratings for those who gained employment, and a total of 27 for those who did not become employed, the main difference occuring again during the student teaching period, when those who were not employed believed they had improved in six competency clusters in which their counter-parts remained the same.

The administrators of those 14 educators in sample two who were teaching during the first year after graduation were also mailed an instrument designed to collect their judgments of the educators' competence in each of the 20 competence clusters. In every instance, administrators rated the beginning educators higher than did the home economist herself.

Attitudes toward children as shown by the MTIA for sample one students did not change significantly during the methods course, or during the year following graduation. However, the subjects became significantly less warm and supportive toward children during the student teaching block. This finding is similar to that of Chadderton in the study of home economics majors cited earlier, and to changes of education student attitudes reported by Osmon (1959), Geurinner(1968), and Muuss (1969).

Commitment to education, as shown by MPOC scores, increased significantly during both the methods course and the student teaching block, but then decreased significantly during the year following graduation. One wonders if teachers see themselves making less professional contributions once on the job than when in college because they must devote more time to planning lessons and managing homes.

No changes in philosophy of education were shown by the last short instrument, although some may have occured. Much more work is needed on development of this evaluation device.

Discussion

The limitations in design of this study are obvious, such as gathering evidence of change from only one source, the students themselves. Again we have no way of knowing whether the student teachers' MTAI scores changed in the direction of their cooperating teacher or college supervisors attitudes.

On a more positive outlook, the research has contributed to change in curriculum. For example, a course in guidance is being offered to home economics majors. A sophomore level course is being begun this fall to aid students in self screening into or out of home economics education. Finally, these same students are being followed into their second year on the job. They are now returning the instruments which show competence and professional commitment self ratings. The question remains as to whether a beginning teacher improves in these areas during her first years on the job but needs two years, rather than one, in which to sense and report such improvement.

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Self-Evaluations by Home Economics Education Majors
While in College and on the Job: A Longitudinal Approach to Curriculum Study

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Table 1

SEQUENCE OF SELF EVALUATIONS

Stages in Home Economics Education	Sample One[1]		Sample Two[2]	
	Date	Number	Date	Number
Start of 3 s.h. curriculum and methods course	Sept. 1971	52		
Start of 12 s.h. block	Feb. 1972	33	Oct. 1971	26
End of block courses	May 1972	33	Dec. 1971	26
One year after graduation	May 1973	31	May 1973	20

[1]Students studied by Pestle

[2]Students studied by Virginia Gayle Sasser, "Development of Teaching Competencies of Home Economics Educators" (unpub. M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1973).

Table 2

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANGES IN COMPETENCE SELF-RATINGS OF TWO GROUPS OF HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION MAJORS

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Competence Category	Pre-Post Methods	Pre-Post Student Teaching Block		After Graduation	
	Sample One	Sample One	Sample Two	Sample One	Sample Two
Instructional planning	6.48**	7.54**	5.69***	2.50*	.75
Instructional execution	4.89**	3.18**	4.55**	2.43*	.16
Instructional evaluations	3.99**	3.71**	4.91***	.55	1.10
Guidance	.85	2.32*	2.41*	.37	.63
Professional Role Development	.72	2.06*	2.49*	.52	1.32

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001

Table 3

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SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANGES IN COMPETENCE CLUSTERS OF HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION MAJORS

Competence Clusters	Pre-Post Methods	Pre-Post Student Teaching Block		After Graduation
	Sample One	S. One	S. Two	S. One
Instruction-Planning				
Design a Course Unit	4.58**	4.74**	5.39***	1.98
Plan a Lesson	7.27**	6.83**	4.84***	3.16**
Develop Instructional Material	3.78**	8.54**	4.07***	1.39
Instruction-Execution				
Direct Student Activity	2.08*	6.89**	5.97***	2.17
Promote Group Interaction	3.47**	7.90**	.72	2.85**
Apply Basic Instructional Strategies	3.57**	7.38**	4.43***	1.96
Employ Teacher-Centered Methods of Presentation	6.61**	5.51**	4.82***	1.71
Engage Educational Media and Resources	5.48**	.77	2.44*	.30
Instruction-Evaluation				
Evaluate Performance of Students	3.90**	2.41**	5.24***	.39
Develop Test and Rating Sheets	3.47**	3.89**	4.50***	1.63
Administer and Analyze Tests	2.24*	3.83**	3.04**	.93
Guidance				
Obtain Background Information on Students	1.02	1.80	2.44*	1.70
Promote Constructive Interrelationships with Students	.06	4.36**	3.78**	1.86
Counsel Students	.38	1.29	1.83	1.02
Involve Resource Persons and Agencies in Assisting Students	.41	1.08	.89	.04
Assist Students in Planning Post-Graduate Education and Employment	2.14*	.38	1.63	.98
Professional Role and Development				
Uphold Philosophy and Goals of the Profession	1.63	4.69**	3.21**	.46
Contribute Professional Service	.20	.10	.91	1.57
Advance One's Professional Competence	.68	1.13	1.65	.09
Assist with General School Duties	.50	1.33	3.31**	.19

*p <.05
**p .01
***p .000